



# Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot

## *Luzerne/Lackawanna Counties, PA*

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

### BACKGROUND

EPA has selected the Counties of Luzerne and Lackawanna for a Brownfields Pilot. Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties (combined population 547,246) share an industrial past, beginning with the mining of anthracite coal in the late 1700s and continuing with the textile and steel industries until the early 1930s, when these industries began to decline. As the businesses shut down, the area's economy followed; the population also fell nearly 30 percent from 1930 to 1970. This decline continues today as urban sprawl and unplanned growth deplete the region's greenfields and leave brownfields to blight nearby residential neighborhoods. The counties, which contain 116 municipalities, have an unemployment rate of approximately 7 percent.

Recognizing that assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of brownfields will help spur economic growth in the area and take pressure off the remaining greenfields, the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council have taken the lead in establishing the Brownfields Development Opportunities Task Force for Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. The task force complements the state's Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program, which provides tax abatement

### PILOT SNAPSHOT



Luzerne/Lackawanna Counties,  
Pennsylvania

Date of Announcement:  
June 1999

Amount: \$200,000

Profile: The Pilot targets three brownfields within Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties for assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment in order to spur economic development and protect the area's diminishing greenfields.

#### Contacts:

County of Luzerne  
Office of Community Development  
(570) 824-7214

Regional Brownfields Team  
U.S. EPA - Region 3  
(215) 814-3129

Visit the EPA Region 3 Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/brownfld/hmpage1.htm>

For further information, including specific Pilot contacts, additional Pilot information, brownfields news and events, and publications and links, visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

and preferential state redevelopment funding for designated areas within the two counties.

## OBJECTIVES

The Pilot's objective is to help revitalize the counties' economies and protect the residents' quality of life by conducting brownfields assessments on priority sites. The site assessments will lead to their cleanup and redevelopment and will serve as models to spur redevelopment of other area brownfields. The Pilot will strengthen the task force by adding community and other stakeholders to its membership. The task force will then develop and implement a joint county brownfields redevelopment strategy that will focus on economic development, including an increased tax base and the creation of jobs, protection of greenfields, safeguarding of the public health, and the protection and improvement of land and water supplies.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Activities planned as part of this Pilot include:

- Creating a brownfields inventory for inclusion in a geographic information system (GIS) database;
- Developing criteria for screening and prioritizing brownfields sites;
- Conducting Phase I and Phase II assessments on three priority sites;
- Establishing a public outreach program, including four community workshops to identify brownfields and educate communities regarding site assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment activities; and
- Expanding the task force membership to include land owners, utilities, chambers of commerce and other business leaders, including financial institutions and economic development organizations.

The cooperative agreement for this Pilot has not yet been negotiated; therefore, activities described in this fact sheet are subject to change.